

Activities

Activity 2

Putting Yourself in the Shoes of IDF Soldiers. What Do You Do?

(From www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/Society_&_Culture/whatwouldyoudo.html and www.standwithus.com)

Preparation:

Estimated Time: 1 class period • **Materials:** Paper and pencils

Background: Young soldiers in the field must make instant decisions about what to do in difficult situations. How do they balance humanitarian concerns for innocent civilians with the dangers that could be posed by what seem to be innocent civilians but are actually dangerous people who threaten Israeli lives? What is the outcome of the decisions they make? The situations presented below are taken from real life, with the outcomes described.

Activity:

Divide the class into groups of five each. Have them read one of the six real-life scenarios below and have each group decide among themselves what they would do in such a situation. Have each group report to the class its decision and how it made that decision. Then tell the class what actually happened and go on to the next scenario.

Scenario 1:

You're at a checkpoint in the West Bank. Your job is to check people and vehicles that are requesting entrance into Israel. On a typical day, many Palestinian Arabs cross over from the West Bank into Israel proper, mainly for work and often for medical reasons (many Palestinians use hospitals in Israel). They line up at checkpoints so the Israeli army can search each person and vehicle to make sure they are not carrying weapons.

According to intelligence information you've received, an ambulance is expected to arrive with a wanted terrorist in it carrying an explosive belt for a suicide attack against innocent Israeli civilians.

Suddenly an ambulance arrives, and inside is a woman who is seemingly pregnant. At checkpoints in the past, not everybody who appeared to be pregnant was truly pregnant. The woman appears to be in pain, and her husband is also highly anxious. The ambulance driver says the woman is about to give birth and without the proper medical attention at the hospital, the newborn baby will struggle to survive.

It is a hot day and there is a long line of cars. Your commander is yelling at you on the two-way radio, "Do not let ambulances go through because there is a terrorist in an ambulance!" To complicate the picture, a news video crew is present. To further complicate the situation, the pregnant woman is a religious Muslim, and it is considered disrespectful to touch a religious woman.

You are not a doctor, but you have to make a decision. If you let the ambulance go through and it contains a terrorist, then innocent people will die. If there is no terrorist in this particular ambulance, you may cause the woman to lose her child.

What do you do?

- a) Stop the vehicle. Search it thoroughly. This procedure, especially for ambulances and trucks, can take many hours.
- b) Stop the vehicle. Do a quick search and look-through. You don't pay attention to too much detail, as you want to speed up the process to help the pregnant woman get to the hospital.
- c) Let the vehicle through with little inspection. You trust that the ambulance will be heading directly to the nearest hospital to deliver the woman's baby.

- d) Stop the vehicle but call for an ambulance to come to the checkpoint to transport the woman to the nearest hospital. Check the ambulance she arrived in thoroughly.

What Actually Happened

- d) The vehicle was stopped while another ambulance was immediately called.

Scenario 2:

You are serving in a commando unit in the southern West Bank, south of Hebron. Your current mission is to infiltrate a small village of about 30 people. There is a suspected terrorist living within this small village who is known to have created explosives for suicide bombings. There is a lot of information and research on this particular terrorist, and his arrest is important for the safety and security of Israeli citizens. Your unit is heading by foot to this hilltop village starting at 5:00 a.m. On your trek up to the top of the hill, your leader notices an older shepherd from the village on a nearby hill. The shepherd, with his flock of sheep, sees you and your unit approaching the village.

What do you do?

- a) Chase after the shepherd and arrest him so he does not compromise your mission by warning the village. You release him a couple days after the mission is completed.
- b) Chase after the shepherd and bring him with you on the mission. You have him approach the home(s) of the suspected terrorist (making your lives a bit easier) since he is a local villager. This prevents loud confrontations outside the home but puts the shepherd in harms way.
- c) Ignore the shepherd entirely. You are convinced that he won't warn the village and compromise the mission. Furthermore, you do not want to inconvenience the older man by taking him away from his sheep.

What Actually Happened

- c) The Shepherd ends up inflicting some harm though. He warns the village and the operation is compromised.

Scenario 3:

Your unit is called in to respond to a sniper who is shooting from inside a hospital.

What do you do?

- a) Retaliate by air power or artillery and take the risk of wounding many innocent people.
- b) Enter the highly populated hostile neighborhood, increasing the risk to yourself and fellow soldiers and the risk of making the population even more hostile.
- c) Warn the hospital of your intention to enter and then move in carefully to take out the sniper.

What Actually Happened

- c) The Israeli army warned the hospital and then moved in carefully to take out the sniper.

Scenario 4:

You are part of a patrol unit near the Palestinian city of Jenin. Over the past few weeks, thorough investigative research has found a terrorist aide to be living in a small house on the outskirts of Jenin. He is thought to have assisted a few suicide bombers in the making and preparing of their suicide-bomb belts. Your mission is to go to his house, arrest him, and search his home for additional weapons and bomb-making materials. Your unit's truck approaches his house, enters his home through a side window, and arrests him, avoiding gunfire and confrontation. You order his family to take a few belongings with them for a few hours as the unit has to search the house. The man's wife and kids reluctantly agree, grab a few items and slowly exit their home. The wife and kids all leave the home carrying a bag or backpack with a few home items inside. The man's older son, who is about four years old, is crying and requests repeatedly to go over and say goodbye to his father.

What do you do?

- a) Let the son go to his father and say goodbye. You feel bad that you are separating a father from his son and allow them to exchange a somber farewell.
- b) Put the suspect directly into the truck. You do not allow the son to approach his father to say goodbye.
- c) Take the wife and child with you.

What Actually Happened

- b) The boy ran away. He was chased and caught. He was carrying dynamite sticks in his backpack.

Scenario 5:

Palestinians terrorists shoot at an Israeli civilian car, and you are engaged in a chase. The terrorists flee into a mosque where a prayer service is being held.

What do you do?

- a) Retreat and allow the suspects to escape.
- b) Follow them into the mosque and engage them in a gunfight if they resist arrest.
- c) Request that the religious service be stopped and that everyone come out with their hands up.
- d) Wait for high-level instructions at the risk of not being able anymore to track the terrorists.

What Actually Happened

- a) A group of terrorists in Gaza were holed up in a mosque, and a group of women came and put themselves between the soldiers and the terrorists. The Israelis retreated, and the terrorists were allowed to escape.

Scenario 6:

You are driving in a jeep in the West Bank with another soldier and see a Palestinian placing a pile of rocks in the road that you suspect may be booby-trapped.

What do you do?

- a) Call for instructions.
- b) Disarm the booby trap.
- c) Order the Palestinian you saw to remove the pile.

What Actually Happened

- c) If the soldiers see the Palestinian place the rocks in the road, it is permissible to order the person to remove them. However, if no one is seen placing the rocks, it is forbidden to force a local resident to help move them because civilians cannot be used as human shields.

Wrap-Up: Because Israel is fighting an unconventional war with terrorists who hide among civilians, IDF soldiers have to make difficult on-the-spot decisions. They have strict ethical rules that help them protect innocent Palestinian civilians while at the same time protect Israeli civilians from terrorists.